

Regionwide & Multiple Units

PROPOSAL 43

5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep.

Change all general season sheep harvest tickets in Units 12, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26B, and 26C to registration permits, and allow hunters to obtain a registration permit once every two years as follows:

To address the issue of overcrowding, we propose that all general harvest ticket sheep hunts in Region III (including the youth hunt) be turned into a registration hunt. Within the registration hunt permit conditions, hunters would only be allowed to obtain the registration permit at a maximum of once every two years. Meaning, individual hunters would only be allowed to hunt sheep in Region III using the registration permit at a maximum frequency of every other year. Eligibility for draw sheep hunts would not be impacted by the registration permit, meaning hunters could obtain registration and draw permits within the same or subsequent years. Although our preference is to include all of Region III in the registration hunt, it could also be limited to just Unit 12.

We believe this solution would help reduce hunter crowding but the reduction in hunting opportunity would not impact all sheep hunters since not all hunters hunt every year. For example, of the 369 reported general harvest ticket sheep hunters in Unit 12 in fall 2021, 24% (88 hunters) also hunted sheep in Unit 12 in fall 2020.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? There is overcrowding of sheep hunters which has cascading effects on hunt quality and aesthetics. This issue of overcrowding has been amplified by the current low numbers of sheep throughout much of Region III, which has pushed more hunters into the few areas where sheep numbers remained closer to long-term averages and has increased competition for the lower number of remaining legal rams in the areas where sheep numbers are low. Furthermore, crowding will increase as a result of the recent closure of Unit 19C to youth and nonresident hunters and the closure of portions of the Brooks Range to non-federally qualified subsistence users. Although we recognize that crowding is not a biological issue, it has impacts on hunt quality and aesthetics.

Our solution to this issue is to limit individuals to hunting sheep in general harvest ticket areas at a maximum frequency of once every two years via a registration permit hunt. Although we considered alternative solutions such as shorter seasons and drawing hunts, we feel this solution would best address the issue while retaining the most available open hunting opportunity. If no action is taken, we are concerned that federal closures to non-federally qualified users may be enacted throughout more of Region III, which will have negative impacts on many sheep hunters.

PROPOSED BY: Upper Tanana/Fortymile Fish and Game Advisory Committee (EG-F23-225)

PROPOSAL 44

5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep.

Reduce the sheep bag limit for resident hunters in Units 12, 19, 20, 24, 25, 26B and 26C to one ram with full-curl horn or larger every two regulatory years as follows:

5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep.

Unit 12, 19, 20, 24, 25, 26B & 26C Sheep.

Resident hunters: One ram with full-curl horn or larger **every two 2 regulatory years** [One ram with full curl horn larger] Harvest ticket. August 10-September 20.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Issue: reduced Dall sheep numbers due to winter events over a large percentage of Alaska resulting in fewer available rams available for potential harvest by hunters. Fewer mature legal rams can create competition amongst hunters in the field. Competition often results in pressure to fill tags leading to unacceptable levels of sub-legal harvest. Harvesting of 8-year-old/full curl/both horns broken has been established by ADF&G professional biologists as effective to maintain the sheep populations.

Goal: maintain hunting opportunity for all hunters pursuing Dall sheep by giving incentive to harvest mature legal rams while reducing harvest and pressure on sheep, reducing competition amongst hunters, and allowing for breeding age rams to remain in the herd longer.

Solution: implement a one ram every two years for resident hunters. Nonresident hunters are already one ram every four years. This will force hunters to be more selective in taking rams lowering the number of small breeding age and sub-legal rams taken. Allowing more breeding age mature yet less than full curl rams to remain in the herd after hunting season will reduce pressure on the sheep herd while maintaining resident priority.

PROPOSED BY: Jeff Pralle

(EG-F23-267)

PROPOSAL 45

5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep.

Reduce the Unit 12, 19, 20, 24, 25, 26B, and 26C sheep bag limit for residents to one ram with full-curl horn or larger every four regulatory years as follows:

Implement one ram with full-curl horn or larger every four regulatory years for residents. This regulation already exists for nonresidents and as minor as it is, has made a positive impact towards the resource. As different as it is, the one brown bear every four regulatory years for both residents and nonresidents on Kodiak Island and the Alaska Peninsula has boosted the brown bear population and created the best brown bear hunting opportunity in North America. Very rarely does a brown bear hunter go home empty handed. This same regulation geared towards Dall sheep would have a major impact on the resource in a positive manner.

5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep.

Unit 12, 19, 20, 24, 25, 26B & 26C Sheep.

Resident hunters: One ram with full-curl horn or larger **every four regulatory years** [One ram with full curl horn or larger] Harvest ticket. August 10-September 20.

If nothing is done, the pressure will continue to increase on the Dall sheep resource. Which will eventually lead the Board of Game and or the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to implement restrictions, such as shortening of the season, creation of weapons restriction hunts, limitations or closures placed on different user groups, creation of a statewide draw and maybe even an emergency closure. Ultimately, it will lead to the loss of another Dall sheep hunting opportunity.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? It is known and documented by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and anyone that has hunted Dall sheep in the past couple of years, that the Dall sheep population is down across the entire state. This downturn has created more pressure on the remaining harvestable population of Dall sheep rams. The 2022 season saw an alarming uptick in sub-legal harvest. User group controversy and overall negative sheep hunting experiences have been expressed profusely by the public. Where there are Dall sheep, there is a noticeable presence of hunters. Which ultimately creates higher than normal hunting pressure, increased competition amongst hunters, and even in some cases hunter on hunter conflicts. In order to create an overall enjoyable hunting experience and keep Dall sheep from going to a draw statewide, and most importantly keep sheep on the mountain, a mechanism needs to be put in place to decrease the pressure on the resource, even if it's a minor one.

PROPOSED BY: Spencer Pape, Seth Kroenke, Jeff Rost and Jon Burrows (EG-F23-255)

PROPOSAL 46

5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep.

5 AAC 92.057. Special provisions for Dall sheep and mountain goat drawing permit hunts.

Change all sheep hunting in Units 12, 19, and 20 to drawing permit only for residents and nonresidents, with a set allocation of permits between user groups as follows:

All sheep hunting in Units 12, 19 and 20 should be by draw permit only. Nonresidents are guaranteed 20% of the permits. 10% of the total of these nonresident permits will be issued to second degree of kindred hunters with a separate draw permit number. The nonresident permits should be issued by Guide Use Area and the number determined by the department from their counts. Nonresidents will have to apply with a guide and have a guide-client contract in place with them before they apply. Guides have to be registered for the area the year their hunters are applying and the year the hunt will occur and the guides have to have a Unique Verification Code issued by the Big Game Commercial Services Board before hunters apply. Guides will have a separate code for each guide use area.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? There has been a dramatic decline in the Dall sheep population in Units 12, 19, and 20. I think all sheep hunters should be on draw permit in these areas until the sheep population recovers to 75% of population from the last complete count done before year 2020. Once it has recovered it would then revert back to a general season open to all hunters. There is a possibility it will never reach this level again. 20% of the permits would be guaranteed to nonresidents and 10% of these permits would be issued to second-degree of kindred non-residents under a separate draw. The sheep in these areas need to be protected from over hunting which is obviously occurring with only a 50% success rate for guided nonresidents (normally 75% to 85%) and an 8% success rate for residents (normally 25-30%.) This will give the hunters that draw permits a much higher quality

hunt and rebuild the ram population faster. The nonresident permits should be divided and issued to each guide use area in the units. The number of permits in each area should be determined by the department based on their survey counts.

PROPOSED BY: Dan Montgomery

(EG-F23-326)

PROPOSAL 47

5 AAC 92.011 Taking of game by proxy.

Allow proxy hunting for bison in Units 12, 19 and 20 as follows:

Allow proxy to hunt bison for anyone meeting requirements for other proxy hunts.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? I am a disabled veteran with 100% disability rating. I am wheelchair-bound and unable to shoot a rifle. In the past, I drew a bison tag, but was not allowed by ADF&G to designate a proxy to fill the tag. I believe the major benefit of filling a bison tag is the meat harvested. The possibility of doing so should not be kept from the disabled.

PROPOSED BY: Ivan Nance

(EG-F23-177)

PROPOSAL 48

5 AAC 92.015(a)(4). Brown bear tag fee exemptions.

Reauthorize resident grizzly/brown bear tag fee exemptions throughout Interior and Northeast Alaska as follows:

- (a) A resident tag is not required for taking a brown bear in the following units:

...

- (4) Units 12, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26(B), and 26(C)

...

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Brown bear tag fee exemptions must be reauthorized annually. Reauthorizing the exemption allows residents who have not purchased the \$25 brown bear tag to take bears opportunistically. This reauthorization would assist with our objective of managing Region III brown bear populations for hunter opportunity and would continue to allow hunters to take brown bears opportunistically.

Region III (Interior and Northeast Alaska) brown bear populations are healthy, and harvest is monitored through the brown bear sealing requirement. Reauthorizing all resident brown bear tag fees throughout Region III maintains simpler regulations, provides high resident hunter opportunity, and is not likely to cause declines in these brown bear populations. This reauthorization includes tag fee exemptions for subsistence registration permit hunts in Units 19A and 19B (downstream of and including the Aniak River drainage), 21D, and 24.

The Department of Fish and Game estimates that brown bear harvest accounts for less than 6% of the bear population. Harvest is composed primarily of males and is sustainable. Where harvests are elevated (i.e., Units 20A, 20B, 20D, and portions of 26B), brown bear populations are managed by adjusting seasons and bag limits. The absence of resident tag fees that were in place prior to 2010 appears to have little effect on net harvest across the region in general.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F23-041)

PROPOSAL 49

92.044. Permits for hunting bear with the use of bait or scent lures.

Clarify which rivers in Units 12, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26B, and 26C are major rivers for the purposes of bear baiting as follows:

Clarify under bear baiting regulations what rivers in the interior are a “major river system” that would comply with that definition under 5 AAC 92.044.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Current bear baiting regulations under 5AAC 92.044 (5)(B)(i) state that a person may not use bait or scent lures within:

“(B) one mile of a

(i) house or other permanent dwelling, except that bait may be used within one mile of a cabin if the cabin is on *the opposite side of a major river system*, as identified by the department in the permit, from the bear baiting station;”

There is no definition we can find of what rivers in the interior are a “major river system.” So, bear baiters don’t know what is really legal. Certainly, the Tanana and Yukon Rivers are major river systems, but what about other interior rivers like the Salcha, Chena, Birch Creek etc.?

PROPOSED BY: Fairbanks Fish and Game Advisory Committee (EG-F23-216)

PROPOSAL 50

5 AAC 84.270. Furbearer trapping.

Lengthen the marten trapping season in Units 12, 19, 20, 21, 24 and 25 by two weeks to end March 15 as follows:

5 AAC 84.270(6) Furbearer trapping. Marten.

Extend the marten trapping season in Units 12, 19 - 21, 24, and 25 by as follows: November 1 through **March 15** [FEBRUARY 28]

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Eastern Interior Regional Advisory Council (EIRAC) would like the board to lengthen the season end dates for marten in Units 12, 19, 20, 21, 24, and 25 until March 15 so that trappers targeting lynx during March can have concurrent opportunity to harvest marten. Currently, marten trapping season closes on the last day of February in the aforementioned units but lynx trapping season is open until March 15 in Units 12, 19A, 19B, 19E, 20, 21B, 21C, 21D, 21E, and 25 and until March 31 in Units 19C, 19D, and 21A. Many trappers target both marten and lynx, and this 15-day season extension would allow trappers the opportunity to harvest

a few additional marten.

Shifting climate patterns are causing warmer falls but pushing cold weather farther into the spring. Marten fur quality is still prime in early to mid-March. March typically has the best trail conditions for trapping. In recent years of deep snowfall, it has been difficult to access traplines in February.

EIRAC is also submitting a federal proposal during the current wildlife regulatory cycle that requests the same season extension in the same units. This proposal would align state and federal regulations if both proposals are adopted.

PROPOSED BY: Eastern Interior Regional Advisory Council (EIRAC) (HQ-F23-007)

PROPOSAL 51

5 AAC 84.270. Furbearer trapping.

Align muskrat trapping seasons with beaver trapping seasons in Units 19, 20 (except 20E), 21, 24, 25, 26B, and 26C as follows:

I recommend changing the trapping season for muskrat in Units 19, 20 (except 20E), 21, 24, 25, 26B, and 26C to align with (be the same as) the beaver trapping seasons in those units (i.e. from September until June) to allow for simultaneous open water trapping of these two species in the fall, winter, and spring.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The current trapping season for muskrat in Units 19, 20 (except 20E), 21, 24, 25, 26B, and 26C begins on 1 November, while the beaver trapping seasons in these areas opens in September. Beaver and muskrat are often trapped in overlapping habitats by “water trappers” who pursue them simultaneously using similar gear and equipment. Better aligning the muskrat and beaver seasons to allow for open water trapping in the fall would expand opportunity for trappers who pursue both species.

PROPOSED BY: Stephen Meyers (EG-F23-166)

PROPOSAL 52

5 AAC 92.080. Unlawful methods of taking game; exceptions.

Allow the use of night vision goggles and forward-looking infrared devices for taking furbearers with a trapping license in Units 12, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26B, and 26C as follows:

Allow the use of night vision goggles and forward-looking infrared devices for taking furbearers under a trapping license in all of Region III.

5AAC 92.080(7)(C) artificial light, except that artificial light, **night vision goggles, and forward looking infrared devices** may be used

(i) for the purpose of taking furbearers under a trapping license during an open season November 1 – March 31 in Units 7 and 9-26.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Under current regulations, hunters and trappers can only use artificial light for furbearers in Units 7 and 9 - 26. Opportunity for harvest is lost because of the short “daylight” during the winter months in the Interior and Eastern Arctic Region.

Adding the use of night vision goggles and forward looking infrared devices to the exceptions under unlawful methods would allow hunters and trappers many more hours each day besides what is defined as “daylight.” Region III has a very healthy population of furbearers, and the harvest would be sustainable and provide additional “reasonable opportunity” for harvest for personal use and subsistence.

This could be considered for a statewide proposal but we would like to use the Interior and Eastern Arctic Region as a test area. We anticipate that any additional harvest would not be a conservation issue and testing in one region before considering it statewide would provide an opportunity to look for abuses. This change would be expected to add some burden on the Alaska Wildlife Troopers.

PROPOSED BY: Fairbanks Fish & Game Advisory Committee (EG-F23-219)
